

Babcock L, Peyser B, Vesterlund L, Weingart L. *The No Club, Putting a Stop to Women's Dead-End Work*. Simon and Schuster; 2022. ISBN-13: 978-1982152338.

Alisha Halver, PharmD¹; Elizabeth Monson, PharmD¹; Sydney Armbrust, PharmD¹; Allison Hursman, PharmD²; Jeanne Frenzel, PharmD, PhD¹; Lisa Richter, PharmD¹

¹ North Dakota State University

² Essentia Health

Abstract

This book, *The No Club, Putting a Stop to Women's Dead-End Work*, is helpful for pharmacy school faculty struggling with burnout or lack of promotion. Administrators can gain a better understanding of how to distribute non-promotable tasks (NPTs) as well as how to equitably ask their employees to complete NPTs. The hope is that by promoting a better understanding of NPTs, both individuals and organizations would see a benefit by preventing burnout, achieving higher promotability, and equitable allocation of workload.

Keywords: non-promotable task, faculty workload, gender equity, burnout

Overview

The *No Club, Putting a Stop to Women's Dead-End Work* by Babcock, Peyser, Vesterlund & Weingart helps faculty and administrators to identify priorities and optimize their tasks using succinct chapters and straightforward exercises for practical application. The authors describe a "No Club" and discuss how it transformed the careers of a group of women. The book also covers how individuals and organizations are affected by, and can optimize non-promotable tasks (NPTs), which the authors define as a task that "matters to your organization but will not help you to advance your career."

Value to Faculty

The structure of the book makes this accessible to faculty given its layering of practice exercises throughout the chapters. These exercises involve practical, individualized application of the concepts discussed. Any pharmacy faculty member will benefit from applying these exercises to their individual portfolio of work within the organization. For example, exercises in the book give readers the chance to evaluate their workplace's promotable and NPTs, how often they individually take on NPTs, and how often their workplace assigns these tasks to women (chapters 2 and 3). Examples of faculty NPTs may include tasks such as onboarding, training, mentoring, filling in when someone is absent, editing, proofreading, and planning events. NPT's may vary based on an individual job description and the tasks of an organization. Specific examples of the uneven distribution of NPTs are described in both academia and the private sector. Research focused on why women say yes to NPTs and why women get asked to do these tasks is also included (chapters 4 and 5).

Corresponding Author:

Lisa Richter, PharmD
North Dakota State University
School of Pharmacy
Email: Lisa.Richter.1@ndsu.edu

Work-life imbalance and overload are discussed and an exercise is available for the reader to examine themselves for signs of work overload (chapter 6). Specific to pharmacy practice faculty, an article by El-Ibiary and colleagues described burnout risk factors in pharmacy faculty and identified female gender, assistant professors and lack of hobbies as being associated with higher burnout rates.³ This information and self-assessment would be especially important for any individual or supervisor of those with risk factors. Tangible and effective steps that readers can take to determine when and how to say no are also included (chapter 7).

Value to Administrators

The book is equally important for those responsible for assigning and completing tasks. Department chairs or deans may be most interested in the description of how organizations are more successful when NPTs are shared (chapter 9). In a recent pharmacy faculty study by Zeeman et al. workload was a top contributing factor to faculty burnout across all ranks.² In the book, an activity is provided for organizations to evaluate workload, specifically NPTs, including who is most often completing them and the amount of time these consume (chapter 11). The book acknowledges that all individuals must complete some NPTs for the organization and provides steps to make them more evenly distributed. Thoughtful management of NPTs can ensure the workforce is utilized effectively and high performing employees are retained.

Faculty Book Club

A faculty development book club could create an opportunity to discuss how to navigate NPTs and to leverage the results of the book exercises. It is recommended to read the entire book and to complete the exercises outlined to determine how NPTs may be affecting the reader's workload. These chapters and exercises could be discussed as a group. After completing a faculty book club a "No Club" could be formed.

The “No Club” is a group that helps each other assess their portfolio of work and determine which tasks they should say no to. The book includes a useful appendix that serves as a guide for readers who want to recreate a “No Club” with the purpose of providing a space for members to support one another in navigating decisions. Author recommendations for the “No Club” included keeping the group to five or six individuals to keep everyone engaged. They noted not everyone needs to know each other, but they do need to trust one another. Having members who are employed at different places allows different perspectives, and diversity in race, age and position is helpful. Best practices are included such as sharing your goals, coming to the club with recent NPT successes, failures and requests. Accountability is provided by individuals sharing challenges, soliciting feedback from the group and following up at the next meeting with the outcome.

Other Resources

Other similar resources published include the book “Take Back Your Power: 10 New Rules for Women at Work,” published by Deborah Liu and the book “What Works for Women at Work,” by Dempsey and Williams.^{4,5} These texts share toolkits to advance yourself in today’s workplace as well as how to better advocate for yourself and your accomplishments in a workplace with implicit biases. While these books are similar in showing examples of women’s stories, the advantage of the No Club is it contains the research conducted by the authors. Secondly, The No Club includes practical exercises for the reader. Finally, focusing on understanding and identifying NPTs is an important take away from this book. The No Club also has a website where they share other resources including titles for a reader wanting further knowledge and practice with this topic.

Conclusion

Regarding The No Club as a whole, this text would serve pharmacy school faculty or administrators struggling with

burnout or lack of promotion. Faculty can gain an understanding of their NPT distribution and how they acquired those NPTs. Administrators can gain a better understanding of how to distribute NPTs as well as how to properly and fairly ask their employees to complete NPTs. The hope is that by promoting better understanding of NPTs, both individuals and organizations would see a benefit by preventing burnout, achieving higher promotability, and equitable allocation of NPTs.

Conflict of interest: None

Disclosures: None

Disclaimer: The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are those of the authors.

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